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AUTHOR Levy, Tedd
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ABSTRACT

This teacher's guide is designed to accompany the National Issues Forums' "The Superpowers: Nuclear Weapons and National Security." Activities and ideas are provided to challenge students to debate and discuss the United States-Soviet related issues of nuclear weapons and national security. The guide is divided into sections that describe: (1) background information; (2) suggestions for introducing the issues; (3) questions for research and review; (4) questions for discussion; (5) key terms; (6) resource people; and (7) resource materials. Four position choices are presented in order to encourage classroom discussion. They state that: (1) the only way to achieve peace is through military strength; (2) United States and Soviet nuclear arsenals must be reduced in order to achieve peace; (3) tensions, not weapons, pose the greatest threat; and (4) the United States must avoid entangling alliances and a global military presence. Information is provided to help explain and develop proponents' viewpoints on each of these positions. (JHP)

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The Superpowers: Nuclear Weapons and
National Security

Teacher's Guide
Funded by Exxon Education Foundation

National Issues Forums in the Classroom

National Council for the Social
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3501 Newark Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016

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National Issues Forums in the Classroom

National Issues Forums in the Classroom seeks to help students discover through public discussion, their common ground on complex domestic issues. The program's goal is to enhance the quality of civic life by expanding the opportunities for students to discuss and be more informed about specific public issues, such as "The Superpowers: Nuclear Weapons and National Security."

Teachers using this guide, along with the National Council for the Social Studies' more general *Public Issues Program Discussion Guide*, will find ideas and activities which can provide students with useful experiences as they become more effective and responsible citizens.

For ease of use, this guide is divided into several major sections.

- **Background to the issue book:** a brief overview of the contents of the National Issues Forums book.
- **Suggestions for introducing the issue:** an activity to focus student thought on the issue.
- **Questions for review/research:** questions with factual answers found in the issue book or topics for more in-depth research.
- **Questions for discussion:** questions which involve conflicting opinions and form the basis for classroom discussions.

- **Key terms:** terms and concepts that may require clarification during the course of discussion.
- **Resource people:** a representative sample of individuals who may provide additional information.
- **Resource materials:** a selective list of useful sources or materials.

Background to the Issue Book

Five years ago, leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union were exchanging angry rhetoric and both sides began assembling a new generation of nuclear weapons. Some people were worried that the Soviets had achieved military superiority. Others believed that the nuclear arms race had gone dangerously out of control.

While this military buildup has continued, there have recently been renewed contacts between the two superpowers. Yet, despite these latest developments, nuclear anxiety has not entirely abated. America's new MX missile makes some people feel safer and others more fearful. Some worry that nuclear arms talks will not lead to a comprehensive settlement, while others fear that they will — and that almost any agreement will lock the US into a disadvantageous position.

In any case, the US and the Soviet Union remain at odds. Each points at the other thousands of nuclear warheads

that are increasingly accurate, deadly, and difficult to detect. Because the new nuclear missiles are capable of reaching their targets so quickly, each side has its missiles on hair-trigger alert. Meanwhile, other countries are thought to be building nuclear weapons, heightening the danger of proliferation and nuclear confrontation.

US-Soviet relations are at a stalemate. The superpowers are not at war, yet they are hardly at ease. Both sides continue to prepare for a nuclear war everyone agrees must never be fought. Although Americans are talking, trading, and negotiating with the Soviets, there is lingering fear of the awesome weapons that each side has pointed at its principal adversary.

Some people consider this kind of stalemate to be the best we can hope for, and nothing to be all that concerned about. Others believe that America's "Soviet problem" has to be dealt with forthrightly, before the Soviet Union subverts our way of life or the two sides destroy each other in a mutually suicidal war.

Yet, if we want to talk about national security, it is not sufficient to talk about national defense — about arms and how they will be deployed. Since our security depends upon our relationships, we need to address a broader question: What overall

relationship with the Soviet Union can we realistically strive for? What relationship will best serve our security interests — including resistance to Soviet aggression and the avoidance of nuclear war?

Each of the four choices presented for discussion addresses the two inseparable risks: the risk of nuclear war and the risk of Soviet aggression. Each reflects a different set of priorities and a different assessment of the risks we run.

CHOICE 1. The only way to achieve peace is through military strength. To reduce the chief threat to our nation's security — Soviet aggression — we must bolster our military to deter attack and prevent intimidation.

This first choice sees the Soviets as an unrelenting and implacable foe. It calls for competition with the Soviets on all fronts until the US is assured of military superiority and political advantage around the world. Unhampered by arms control agreements, the US will inevitably forge ahead and the Soviets will no longer represent a credible nuclear threat.

CHOICE 2. We must find a way to reduce the nuclear peril as the most immediate threat to our security. Both the US and the Soviet Union must take immediate steps to reduce their nuclear arsenals to ensure that our ongoing struggle does not escalate into a nuclear confrontation.

Proponents of this choice share the belief that Soviet interests are inherently at odds with our own and that we must be ready to counter Soviet aggression at every turn. But they do not believe that nuclear superiority is possible or worth the risks both sides run in pursuing it. They argue that our goal should be to reduce both sides' nuclear arsenals as quickly and as far as possible — at least to the level where each side maintains no more weapons than it needs to deter the other from nuclear attack. Their chief goal is to

ensure that our ongoing struggle with the Soviets does not escalate into a nuclear confrontation.

CHOICE 3. Hostility between the superpowers must be reduced in order to bring the arms race under control. Tensions — not weapons — pose the greatest threat. Our goal should be to ease them through collaboration in areas of mutual concern.

Supporters of this view agree that the nuclear arms race should be brought under control. But they do not believe that this can happen in an atmosphere of hostility between the superpowers, where each continues to regard the other's interests as opposed to its own in every respect. In this view, the relationship is what causes the danger, not the weapons. Proponents of this view call for the US and the Soviets to begin to build trust through businesslike cooperation to solve problems that concern both sides.

CHOICE 4. We should avoid entangling alliances and a global military presence that heightens the chance of confrontation between the superpowers. America's security would be enhanced by withdrawing our forces abroad and building our economic strength and vitality at home.

Proponents of this view would reduce US-Soviet tensions by discarding the assumption that the US must maintain a global role to counter Soviet influence. They say we should gradually withdraw from treaty commitments with our allies, remove our troops and nuclear weapons from overseas, and concentrate on building our defenses and our economy at home. The US risks nuclear war because of its commitments to defend other nations.

Suggestions for Introducing the Issue

An easy and important way to have students focus on the topic is to have them complete the questionnaire accompanying every issue book. After

the questionnaires are completed, they may be used as a guide for introducing further study of the topic. Areas of greatest initial agreement or potential controversy may be identified by taking a quick tally of students' opinions. Selected questions may be set aside for special attention at a later time. Other questions may form the beginning of a tentative discussion agenda.

The completion of the questionnaire is essential for involving students in the **National Issues Forums in the Classroom**, both before and after using the issue books. Students' results should be tallied, both before and after using the issue books, and forwarded to: National Issues Forums, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2777. A report summarizing participants' views will be available from NIF in the spring of 1988.

To introduce students to the content of *The Superpowers: Nuclear Weapons and National Security*, have them participate in a series of competitive and cooperative strategies. While this activity is a simplified game, and application to the behavior of nations is not perfect, it should help personalize superpower relations.

- Divide the class into groups of three, with two players and one scorekeeper.
- Explain that it is a game of cooperation and competition. There are ten rounds of play. For each round you may score -2, 0, 2, or 4 points. The objective is to average 2 points for each round, or obtain a total of 20 points.
- Once the game begins you may not communicate with anyone.
- The scorekeeper will say, "1, 2, 3, show" at which time you must show an open palm (sharing) or a closed fist (taking).
- Scoring is as follows:
 - One shows fist — 4 points
 - One shows palm — 0 points
 - Both show palm — 2 points each
 - Both show fist — -2 points each

After going through this activity discuss the idea of cooperative and competitive pressures on behavior. Does taking by one player lead to distrust? Was there an escalation of taking? What would happen if players were allowed to communicate with each other? What, if anything, can be learned from this activity about international relations?

Rethinking the US-Soviet Relationship

Questions for Review/Research

1. What has been US policy toward the Soviet Union since 1945?
2. What is the status of the existing relationship between the US and the Soviet Union?

Questions for Discussion

1. Can the US coexist in the world with the Soviet Union?
2. Is the existing nuclear stalemate a reason to feel safe or a cause for worry?
3. Over the long term, what can be done to reduce the nuclear threat without simultaneously making us vulnerable to Soviet attack?
4. Should the US pursue military superiority while trying to frustrate Soviet global ambitions?
5. What Soviet actions are so threatening that the US must respond?
6. Does the new Soviet leadership create new opportunities to resolve nuclear and other differences?
7. Is the Soviet Union an expansionist empire? If yes, why would we consider limits on our military power? If no, why are we pursuing nuclear policies that could result in mutual destruction?

Key Terms

arms race
superpowers
proliferation
confrontation
stalemate
mutual assured destruction
national security
nuclear superiority

Peace through Strength: Regaining the Upper Hand

Questions for Review/Research

1. What evidence supports the view that the Soviet Union has a long-standing commitment to global expansion?
2. What evidence is there that the Soviets a) never negotiate seriously, and b) only understand strength?
3. How is the Strategic Defense Initiative supposed to work and how has it been criticized?
4. In what ways should the US seek to roll back communist gains?

Questions for Discussion

1. Is the program of Soviet reform simply an effort to disarm Western critics?
2. Is American dominance in US-Soviet relations a realistic and desirable goal?
3. Is seeking arms reduction through negotiations with the Soviets a realistic and desirable goal?
4. Does the US have the will to defend the free world against the spread of communism?

Key Terms

"evil empire"
"iron curtain"
detente
SALT
SDI
democratic ideals
totalitarian
arms control
"point defense"
"dominant America"

A Safer Competition: Cooperating on the Nuclear Issue

Questions for Review/Research

1. What is the argument for greater US-Soviet cooperation on the nuclear issue?
2. What cooperative efforts have been made by the Soviets to reduce the nuclear threat?
3. How do current Soviet leaders view the arms race?
4. How do critics view proposals for

reducing nuclear arms?

Questions for Discussion

1. Does the production of more nuclear weapons increase the danger of war?
2. Has the arms race over the past 40 years maintained the peace?
3. Would sharp reductions in nuclear arms help secure, or endanger, the peace?
4. Is there a substantial danger of nuclear war starting accidentally?

Key Terms

symptoms
"first use" policy
launch-on-warning
conventional arms

Common Concerns: Working with the Soviets

Questions for Review/Research

1. How do proponents of superpower cooperation explain the influence of history and economics on Soviet attitudes?
2. In what areas has US-Soviet cooperation been most productive?
3. How are cultural and scientific exchange programs today helping both countries?
4. What are the dangers associated with working with the Soviets?

Questions for Discussion

1. Would a cooperative approach toward the Soviets ease superpower conflict and pave the way for reductions in nuclear arms?
2. Would US security be strengthened if the US abandoned attempts to achieve military superiority over the Soviets, and settled for a situation in which neither side had an edge?
3. Should the US actively oppose the establishment of communist governments in Third World countries?
4. To improve national security, should the US maintain and expand cultural and scientific exchange programs with the Soviets?
5. Can two competing superpowers with different values reach peaceful accommodations in national security matters?

Key Terms

ideology
mutual security
Third World
exchange programs
trade-offs

America on Its Own: Redefining Our Global Commitments

Questions for Review/Research

1. How have contacts and treaties with allies served to protect US national security interests?
2. How has the decision to maintain a worldwide military presence affected US security and economy?
3. To what extent does the US maintain a worldwide military presence?
4. What do critics see as new problems and dangers if the US were to follow a policy of withdrawing from global commitments?

Questions for Discussion

1. Does it serve US national security interests to maintain mutual defense treaties with other nations?
2. Does a global military role help or hamper US national security interests?
3. If the US reduced its global military role would there be less danger of conflict abroad?
4. How realistic and desirable is a policy of America-on-its-own?

Key Terms

entangling alliances
nuclear deterrent
isolationism

Which Direction for Superpower Relations?

Questions for Review/Research

1. What were the Kennan and Lippmann arguments for dealing

with the Soviet Union?

Questions for Discussion

1. Should the US take immediate steps to reduce its nuclear arsenal, and if so, how is that likely to affect relations with the Soviet Union?
2. Is collaboration with the Soviets in areas of mutual concern a realistic possibility, and can such collaboration reduce tensions between the superpowers?
3. Does it make sense to proceed with the Soviets on the assumption that whatever makes them less secure enhances US security, or is a strategy of "common security" a realistic alternative?
4. Would the US be more, or less, secure if its military presence abroad were scaled down while focusing on internal affairs and our own defense?

Key Terms

containment
national security
adversary relationship

Resource People

- Defense contractors
- Military personnel
- Foreign affairs reporters
- College and university instructors
- Soviet-born residents
- Congressional representative or staff
- Local officials

Resource Materials

Carnegie Corporation of New York (437 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022). Philanthropic organization that publishes a free quarterly newsletter. Write for the Winter 1987 issue on "Managing a Delicate Balance: Arms Control and the Strategic Defense Initiative," and coming newsletters.

Center for Defense Information (600

Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20024). Provides information on nuclear war, US-Soviet military comparisons, arms control, and other issues. Has various publications including *The Nuclear War Prevention Kit*.

Foreign Policy Association (729 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019). Publications relating to foreign policy issues, arms control, the Soviet Union, etc. Publishes *Great Decisions*, an activity book, and conducts Great Decisions program. Write for catalog.

The Jefferson Foundation (1529 18th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036). Holds forums to discuss the Constitution and contemporary American society. Has a "Guide for Teachers." Write for list of materials.

Social Science Education Consortium (855 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80302). Services and publications, including *Teaching About Peace and Nuclear War: A Balanced Approach* and "Handbook of Russian and Soviet History."

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Embassy of (1125 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036). Source for official Soviet position.

U.S. Department of State (Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20520). Variety of publications, many available free. See May 1987 issue of *Gist*, on "Soviet Military Withdrawals" and also the Presidential address on "The Current State of Soviet-American Relations." Write for publications list and to be on mailing list for future offerings.

Prepared by:
Tedd Levy
Nathan Hale M.S.
Norwalk, Connecticut



To become involved, write:
Dr. Jon Rye Kinghorn
National Issues Forums in the Classroom
100 Commons Road
Dayton, Ohio 45459-2777